



(Photo by Pfc. William Hatton, 7th MPAD)

Drink water!

Sgt. Michael Kasper and Staff Sgt. Roy Starbeck, Soldiers with 2nd Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, pull bags filled with bottled water from a Blackhawk helicopter in a field in southern Baghdad, March 9. (See story page 4)

Charlie opens 'Cobra Cabana'

**By Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim
2-1 Cav. Public Affairs**

BAGHDAD - The last few weeks have been extremely "hectic" for Mustang Soldiers. The new security plan has sent them looking for a new place to live and building up the security measures to keep themselves safe.

For members of the Company C, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, who used to live in Forward Operating Base Rustamiyah, the order to

move out into the Baghdad populace left them asking one question.

"We were like, 'Why?'" said Staff Sgt. Keith McDonald, a dismounted squad leader from Fort Worth, Texas assigned to Co. A now attached to Co. C. "In the beginning, we were uncertain what our mission would be."

When they first started the move, the Soldiers slept out of their vehicles in a palm grove and pulled their own security, according to Capt. Joseph Rosen, Co. C commander. "It was a difficult sell to the Soldiers, where, on the FOB, they are rela-

tively safe -- to come out here, where they always have to keep their guard up," said Rosen who hails from Fort Polk, La.

Rosen said they knew the palm groves would be a temporary camp since the area would not be safe. So, they started scouting out places to live. They eventually found a building nestled within an industrial area of Rustamiyah, a section of Baghdad southeast of Sadr City.

According to the local residence,

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Charlie's move to the community keeps them busy

Cobra

From Page 1

the militia once inhabited the former snack packaging plant. During their occupation, many of the local business owners were forced out of their businesses and homes.

"These guys here were wealthy, so they were targeted [by the militia]," Rosen said.

When the militia made their recent mass exodus, they left the building in flames.

"Some parts of the building were still on fire," said Pfc. Arturo Huerta, of Dinuba, Ca.

During their move into their new combat outpost known as "Cobra Base," the Soldiers worked tirelessly to set up security measures.

They are without many of the amenities their brethren at nearby bases enjoy, but they continue to make improvements to what they now call the "Cobra Cabana."

"To me, it seems like the people here want to help out," said Spc. Joshua Vickroy, of Augusta, Ga. "These guys will help out. They give us info and ask us if we need help. Overall, we get good feelings from them."

"These guys are working miracles to get their areas set up," Hanson said. "We've said we are a part of the community, but you can't get a walk-in tip into [FOB] Rustamiyah. Out there, we are a part of the community



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim 2-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

Spc. James Booth, Co. A, 1st Bn., 8th Cav. Regt., 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div., is about to catch a case of water at their new COP in Baghdad March 9.

because they work in the community."

As their support company continually brings in supplies and cement barriers, the local children swarm to the Soldiers chanting, "mista, mista," and asking for chocolate. As Vickroy watches the children play near their tanks, he said by his unit being there, he hopes the children have what he had growing up.

"I just want them to have the same things I had when I was growing up - the hopes and dreams I had - just to have the opportunity to shoot for my dreams," he said.

For McDonald, being able to live and work so closely to the community they will

help protect is paramount to his mission. Another thing the Soldiers said they want is for many of the residents who were forced to leave their homes and businesses to eventually come back to their normal lives.

"I want them to know that we are not going to leave them high and dry, and that we are here to stay. We want them to feel safe. We want them to get their economy up; we want them to make money, so they can help themselves," he said. "We are always out here; we are always in sector. Maybe when they see that, they will know we are here to help them, and I think that's a big deal."

Arabic Phrase of the Day

tawil

**Defined:
long**

Iraq 3-Day Weather Report



Today

High: 81
Low: 54



Tomorrow

High: 82
Low: 54



Wednesday

High: 77
Low: 55

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(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins 1st ACB Public Affairs)

Sgt. Hector Sanjurjo, a technical inspector for Company B, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, keeps the rhythm for the band Last Ditch Effort during Bunker 182, an alternative, contemporary Christian program aimed at younger Soldiers at Camp Taji, Iraq.

Christian service rocks Taji theater

**By Spc. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB Public Affairs**

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - The 1st Air Cavalry Brigade's alternative, contemporary Christian service, Bunker 182, rocked Taji Theater, March 4, with over 70 Soldiers in attendance.

Expecting only about 40 Soldiers, the Chaplains' were pleased to see almost every seat was filled, said Austin, Texas, native Chaplain (Capt.) Ben Clark of 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division.

The Soldier/civilian band, Last Ditch Effort, opened up the night with Christian rock songs that kept heads nodding and feet tapping to the beat.

"Last Ditch Effort was a wonderful mixture of vocal and musical talents. ... It was definitely better than sitting in my room playing X Box," said Palm Bay, Fla., native Spc. Damien Steinrich, a paralegal for 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div.

"The band sets the tone for the night. It sets the energy level - It's loud and rocking. That's what these Soldiers want," said Brandon, Fla., native Chaplain (Capt.) Michael Fox, of 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment.

Along with the rock music, there were

audience participation games. This night brought about eight Soldiers up to the front for a belching contest.

The winner for the female side, standing at only 4 feet 11 inches tall, was Fuquay-Varina, N.C., native Pfc. Erica Avent, a paralegal for 1st ACB.

"We are all fueled by something, just like any vehicle. If you put the wrong fuel in, you'll get disastrous results. We're suggesting running your life on integrity and faith," said Clark.

The overall concept of Bunker 182 is to give Soldiers an alternative to the normal church service and take their minds off of the daily toils of being at war.

"The bottom line of course is that people's lives will be improved. As they go out in the workplace or in their relationships, there will be a morale compass there ...," said Hugo, Minn., native Chaplain (Maj.) Charles Causey, 1st ACB's chaplain.

Bunker 182 also exists partly because Chaplains see the hardships and adversities Soldiers face everyday - realizing they needed a release.

"When Soldiers walk away and say, 'I got to tell somebody about that,' that determines a success for me," he said.

Baghdad in Brief

Iraqi security forces find weapons cache in cemetery

KALSU, Iraq - Iraqi and U.S. security forces conducted a search of Al Khider cemetery near Yusifiyah, Iraq in order to capture terrorists and weapons caches March 10.

The Iraqi Soldiers searched the cemetery while Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division conducted a search of the surrounding area.

Found inside the cemetery were 35 500 pound bombs with the explosives removed, four hand grenades with explosive removed, one light machine gun, one damaged 35mm anti-aircraft gun, one surface-to-air missile case and components to a U.S. radio system.

One individual was detained and being held for further questioning.

'Golden Dragons' detain man, weapons after taking fire

RADWANIYAH, Iraq - Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers arrested a man and confiscated a weapons cache in a house near here, March 10.

Soldiers of Company D, 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment "Golden Dragons," 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) received small arms fire from the house Feb. 23. Marking the building as a potential site for future search, they returned to search the house and found a cache.

Among the weapons found were a Mauser rifle, 38 rounds for the Mauser, four AK-47 fully loaded magazines, 300 loose AK-47 rounds, over 200 9mm pistol rounds, copper wire (typically used to trigger improvised explosive devices) and a camera.

The Soldiers detained the resident of the house and confiscated the weapons and ammunition.

The man is being held for questioning.

Tomahawk troops trade Strykers for marching boots

By Pfc. William Hatton
7th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - In the marsh farmlands south of Baghdad, coalition forces aren't a typical presence from day to day. Most Iraqis in this area work hard farming the land and trying to make a decent living, others have more malicious intentions.

When information came in that insurgents are possibly running training camps in this rural area, Tomahawk Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, along with Iraqi soldiers didn't hesitate making their presence known as they searched the farmland for potential threats, March 9.

For Tomahawk Soldiers, a Stryker means a lot of things. It's often a second home, a cafeteria, and living room as troops sometimes live, eat and sleep in their Strykers. In this rural farmland however, troops took left their wheels behind. They took off hiking throughout the marshland with only their marching boots and assault packs, as the roads were too narrow for most Strykers to drive down.

"Because of the routes and the weight

of the Strykers, we couldn't really drive in anywhere, either because of all the water or all the vehicles would either roll over and get stuck," said Sgt. 1st Class Eric Beck, a platoon leader for 2nd Platoon, A Co., 1-23rd Inf. Reg., 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.

"We basically had to park the vehicles and walk in through the different channels and canals working our way down the street to our objective," said Beck, a native of Fontana, Calif.

After numerous mortar attacks, intelligence reports said that the point of origin was coming from a fish hatchery in the farmland that was also suspected of being a training camp for insurgents, said 1st Sgt. Cero Pinheiro, with A Co., 1-23rd Inf. Reg., 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.

Although searching the area for specific threats turned up empty, Tomahawk troops were still successful as they continued progressive work with the Iraqi Army, and making a presence known in the area.

As far as the Iraqi soldiers work today and in recent missions, they have come a long way, Beck said.

"They still have a long way to go, but over the last few months I have definitely seen great improvement," he said.

"By having the Iraqi soldiers working



A Soldier with Co. A, 1st Bn., 23rd Inf. Regt., 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., crosses through tall foliage during a mission in Southern Baghdad, March 9.

with us during the mission shows the locals that even though we're in the area, these are the guys that are going to be coming through later," said Pinheiro, a Tacoma, Wash., native.



(Photos by Pfc. William Hatton 7th MPAD)

Tomahawk Soldiers from Co. A, 1st Bn., 23rd Inf. Regt., 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., walk along rural southern Baghdad farmland searching for possible insurgents and securing an area during an ongoing mission, March 9.

Family celebrates promotion through technology

**By Spc. Alexis Harrison
2-1 Cav. Public Affairs**

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq - A promotion to sergeant major only happens once in a Soldier's lifetime and is considered the pinnacle of a noncommissioned officers career.

Newly-promoted Sgt. Maj. Doug Maddi, a Las Vegas native with 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, out of Fort Carson, Colo., was promoted during a surprise ceremony at his battalion headquarters March 3. Not only were dozens of high-ranking guests on hand for the event, but Maddi's family back in the United States was able to watch the historic ceremony through modern technology.

Maddi's wife, family members and dozens more family members of his comrades watched with tears in their eyes as Maddi's senior noncommissioned officer in charge, Command Sgt. Maj. Charles Sasser, and his commanding officer, Lt. Col. Stephen Michael pinned the insignia on his hat and chest.

"I'm very happy my wife was able to

be a part of it," Maddi said.

The career of Maddi began at Fort Benning, Ga., where he attended basic training, airborne school and the Ranger Indoctrination Program before he was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. With the 2nd Battery., he was part of a combat jump into Panama in support of Operation: Just Cause.

After his time in the Regiment, he was assigned to the 6th Ranger Training Brigade in Florida where he met the famed crocodile hunter Steve Irwin and appeared on the critter-capturing show.

He then returned to Benning to serve as a platoon sergeant and assistant operations NCO for the 2nd Battalion of the ranger regiment.

Three years later, he was assigned to the University of Southern California's Reserve Officer Training Course as the senior instructor of military science.

His first stint as a company's top NCO, was with Company B, 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment (Air Assault) in Camp Greaves, Korea.

While with 1-506th, he was later

assigned as the headquarters company 1st sergeant and accompanied them through a rotation into Iraq during Operation: Iraqi Freedom III.

The parachute battalion was re-flagged as the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment in 2004. Maddi took over the 1st sergeant slot for Company A during the battalion's current rotation in support of OIF 06-08

"It's been a humbling experience," Maddi said.

Not only was Maddi thanked for his selfless service by Sasser and Michael, his wife, Jenny, was thanked for the many contributions to the unit and the Soldiers under Maddi's care. Many of the Soldiers of Company A and 2-12 Inf., have received care packages from Maddi's family as well.

Maddi will travel back to the U.S. to attend the Sergeants Major's Academy before returning to duty.

He hopes to return to the troops of 2-12 Inf., but acknowledged that the Army may place him in another unit in need of a sergeant major.



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison 2-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

After being promoted to sergeant major, Sgt. Maj. Doug Maddi, 2nd Bn., 12th Inf. Regt., gives an acceptance speech while his commanders, comrades and family watch March 3.